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By EDYTHE SQUIER DRAPER

Quiet came to the house. It had been shaking and roaring under Mamma's feet on dead Grandmamma's old sewing-machine. The suddenness of the quiet made Lillian, with *Capitola the Madcap* close up to her face, bat her eyes, clear her throat, shuffle her feet, though she did not know she did these things. It made her hear — almost — when Mamma called:

"Lilli-an! Lil-lian!"

Her body shook, like a colt's getting rid of flies. But next time she would answer.

"Lilli-an! Lil-lian!"

"Wha-at?"

"Put the water on for the mush."

"Ye-es —"

"Well, don't forget."

She put out one hand, the hand that did not have *Capitola the Madcap* in it, and felt around. It touched nothing. Her feet took two slow steps. Her hand came to a kettle, to something rough on the kettle's side. Without looking up from the piece of ragged book, she took her hand away, wiped it on her dress. She kept on standing beside the table, reading. Since dinner-time she had been standing there. But she did not know that. She did not know where she had been standing.

"Lil-lian!"

The voice of the woman calling was sharp, tired, now.

"Ye-es —"

"Did you put the water on? Did you?"

"I'm going to."

"Well. Don't forget."

Was — was it supper time? Supper time? Already? Well, pretty soon. As soon as she came to the end of the page. She came to the end of the page. She turned it, came to the end of the next page. She stopped. Because the rest of the book was gone. A woman heard the door open in the night. A man came in. She called. The voice that answered was not the voice of the man she was married to. Well, what was going to happen next? It was bothersome, having the rest of the book gone. She would go over to Martin's barn and look and maybe she would find the end near that old bench with broken harness lying across it, where she had found the beginning. Yawning she began to move dishes on the table, making a place for the dishpan. Well, she was pretty good at finding books to read. She had found a whole cupboard at school that nobody seemed to bother about. She had read some of one called "Views Afoot", about Europe. In one named "The Alhambra", she had picked out the stories and read them. She had read all of the books written by a man named George Eliot. Grandpapa's bookcase and his secretary had a smell. They gave you the same feeling that a table of dishes stuck up with mush and dried prune juice did, or *Partial Payments*, or the middle of the street in this Ohio town, deep yellow mud through which the dray went splashing down to the station to bring the mail sacks from the train to the post-office. Mud, blackness and brownness in winter, in Ohio. Minnesota was better in winter. Minnesota was white. Then suddenly the white was gone and green came.

But Lillian did not think of liking or not liking things. She put off dishes as long as she could and then she did them, working at them, scraping, scraping, scraping, till they did not show any more dirt. But she did not think about dishes. She read in whatever book seemed to have something to read in it, and then she did dishes and found something to read, and read.

The fire was out in the stove now. You could tell. The stove had that look. You didn't need to touch it. She

went out and hunted for the hatchet. After a long time she found it under the tree. Tennyson had been chopping at the tree. She broke up some boards that had fallen away from the porch, brought them in, laid them in the stove, poured in a little coal-oil from the lamp — and there was a fire. Enough water was left in the bucket to prime the well with. So, pretty soon, the water for mush was on, beginning to steam.

She scraped the dinner dishes, the knife squeaking, squeaking. There wasn't any soap. Mamma said her this week's five dollars from Papa wouldn't stretch to buy soap, until washday, and then they'd have to have a bar. Well, this dinner mush was certainly hard. Soap would be some help. She took her hand out of the lukewarm water slipping around the dishes, wiped it on her skirt, got a knife and went out of the kitchen. She crawled through a place in the fence where two pickets were out and came to Martin's back door. Rose and Ella were out in front with two boys. They didn't have any mother and their father was mostly out on the farm. Lillian went into the empty quiet kitchen. There it was, the quite long piece of yellow soap, on a saucer, beside the water-bucket. She hurried and cut off a tiny strip. The strip was so small you couldn't tell any was gone from the cake. She went with it sticky in her warm hand back to the dishpan, full of dishes with hard mush on them. She didn't feel thievish. She didn't feel anything. She had needed the soap. Martins' wouldn't miss it.

Mamma came to make the mush. Mamma did not say anything, did not talk while she worked. She went about in her dark blue wrapper, her face quite white, her blue eyes not seeming to see anything. Mamma sewed, took care of the baby, cooked mush and prunes, sometimes potatoes, and on Monday began the washing she was never strong enough to finish, so that Lillian and Tennyson and Beatrice always washed the big thick ragged dirty stockings and the colored things and hung them out and emptied the tubs, or left them till next washday.

A woman had come to stay when the baby was born. Lillian saw Mamma's face, twisted and crying, for a moment when the door was open. She had said, "Burton!" But Burton, Papa, was not there. Lillian did not forget about this. It meant something, something she didn't know about. She did not think about it often.

She did not think about anything. She did not feel anything. She washed dishes, went to school and read all the books in that cupboard between the two rooms of the school. The teacher used to call her when the Arithmetic class was going up front and she would march along with the big girls swinging up the aisle, the points of their pencils in their mouths while they laughed and pushed their elbows against each other and said out loud to the boys, "Naow, you qui-ut!" The girls would go to the board with some of the boys and do partial payments, fill all the blackboard with figures and figures. Lillian wondered — a little — about these figures, wondered what they meant, how anybody could know. The teacher tried to have her recite, but all the boys laughed out loud and all the girls, so he stopped trying and let her read. Her eyes were always red and she had sties and colds.

While they were eating their supper mush — Tennyson and Beatrice and Murillo giggling and playing, Mamma not talking, her face long and not smiling, not noticing what the children did unless they made too much noise — some one came jumping into the kitchen, came on into the dining room. Ella Martin wanted something. Had she noticed that some soap was gone?

No. She said:

"Say, Lillyun, can yuh go to th' revival t'night? I ain't got nobody to go with. Paw says I can go with you if your Maw says so. I can't go if your Maw says you can't."

Mamma did not look at Ella.

Revival. Papa had had revivals. Before he preached that sermon in the Minnesota town that last Sunday night. Papa had left the town that next day to go and *stump* Minnesota for McKinley. The people had come to see Mamma about that sermon. Some of the women cried and said their church was as good as any church. Mamma said, yes, it was, she was sorry. Papa was in New Jersey now, working at Fraternal Insurance.

"Aw, leave 'er go," Ella said.

"Well —" Mamma stopped a moment, "I suppose —"

"Awright. I'll be over after yuh, Lillyun." Ella ran out.

Mamma was not the same as the Martins. Ella's papa was a farmer. He had money to live in town with and Rose and Ella went to school in town. They had pancakes. They had a piano. They had plenty of soap. They stayed up late at night and laughed with boys.

Lillian put on her fez to go to the revival. There was no other hat or cap for her to wear. Papa had bought the fez in Jerusalem. It was a *curio*. It had no seam in it! It was dark red and had a black tassel. The boys and girls at school laughed at it, at first when she wore it, but not much any more. She looked in the mirror to put it on. Her cheeks were quite nice, pink. If her eyes had not been red-rimmed they would have been nice eyes. Sometimes she liked to see herself. Her hair was brown, hung in waves and curls along her cheeks, under the dark red fez. When she was looking at herself now in the mirror of dead Grandmamma's side-board, she saw Mamma's eyes seeing her from the bedroom. Mamma, a woman, seeing her, a girl, looking at her, smiling just a little. Mamma had all the other children in the bedroom. She was going to read *Swiss Family Robinson* to them.

Ella Martin came. She had yellow frizzed bangs and a light blue hat, not very clean, that went up high in front. Her nose was wide. Her blue eyes rather stuck out.

There were low piles of snow that looked like tired white giants asleep here and there on the ground. The stars were low and bright, singing. Out in the dark, going somewhere! Ella squeezed Lillian's arm; Lillian squeezed Ella's. Other people were walking on the board or brick sidewalks in the dark. You could hear them. They were walking to Otterbein University. Otterbein University was a long red building reaching right across a street. It seemed to shut the town up, so that you would have to fly if you wanted to get out of it. Lillian had seen pictures — there were some in *Views Afoot* — of buildings like this, with a high pointy roof and a steeple. She liked Otterbein University.

They went in through the red lighted doorway with its pointed arch. The chapel room was light in spots, several lamps hanging down from the ceiling, some of them smoking, so that a pleasant exciting smell of coal-oil hung in the air. There were old people and young people. The old people sat in the front. As soon as they got in where people were Ella Martin began tossing her head and laughing, as if Lillian said funny things. They sat down and then Ella turned around and looked everywhere. Suddenly she jumped up, pulling Lillian.

"C'mon!" she said, laughing and laughing.

They went over people's knees into another bench. Ella ducked her head and laughed and laughed. She sat down. Lillian sat down. Ella turned half way around and slapped at a boy sitting behind her now. The boy caught her hand and she said, "Qui-ut! Qui-ut!" Lillian thought maybe she would do that way with a boy some time.

People, more and more people, came in until the chapel was full. Some of the people talked; others sat in dark wrinkled clothes not talking, not looking. They had left their comfortable chairs, their beds. They had come to church.

The meeting began. A woman played a small brown organ. A man with a bare yellow chin shining between

black whiskers that streamed away on both sides of it, stood beside the small organ. He sang and hit his book on his hand — smack! — and walked around under the lamp hanging from the ceiling. His black eyes, like big black prunes, went looking at everybody, though not long at the older men and women on the front seats. The big man looked at the back benches where the boys and girls were. He knew the words of the songs without the book. He sang, shouted and sang. He sang and looked at the people, some on his right hand, some on his left, some in front.

Lillian liked to sing. Ella did not sing. She turned around and she and the boy talked out loud and laughed.

The big preacher began to pray. His voice went shaking up and then down. It was very loud and then it was low, sort of crying, and some women in front cried.

More singing, then, more and more. And then the big man *pushed* the organ away and preached. He yelled and stamped. His voice was the loudest noise Lillian had ever heard, and she had heard 'vangelists before. Old men said, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" The place was full of noise.

Suddenly the preacher stopped. Everybody sat quite still. Then he shouted out:

"Testimonies! Let's have testimonies! Who'll be the first? Of course, if the Lord hasn't done a blamed thing for you, why just sit still and don't say a thing. If he has blessed you, get up; get up, say so, praise his name. Now! Now! Who'll be the first?"

Old women and old men got up. They said things. Some of them were excited, others' voices were sad and low. Many of these you could not hear. The big preacher went walking around, hitting his hands together, saying, "Yes, yes. Glory! Yes!" But his eyes were not on the old men and women. He frowned and looked over their heads. "Yes, yes. Glory! Now, let's hear from some young men. Some young men. How 'bout you, Brother

Summers? Word to say for th' Lord tonight? You've give your self to the Gospel Ministry. Let's hear from you."

A young man got up and cleared his throat and said, "Let us pray!" And a long, long time he prayed. The preacher said, "Glory!" and then "Glory!" After a while he said, "Amen! A-amen!" very loud and he walked and blew his nose and cleared his throat. The young man prayed and prayed. Feet shuffled, people coughed here and there. And then, "Amen!!" very loud indeed the preacher said and clapped his hands and said, "Now, another! Let's hear from another! Now let's hear from one of our new young converts. Brother Harry Olds!"

Brother Harry Olds got slowly up. His Adam's apple went up and down fast in his long red neck. "I'm thankful I'm a Christian," he said. "I b'lieve my soul's saved. I b'lieve I'm safe from hell." He did not sit down, kept standing up holding to the back of the pew in front of him. His mouth moved, but the words seemed stuck in him.

The preacher clapped his hands. "Yes! Yes! Praise the Lord! Amen! Let's hear from some one else. Some one else."

Brother Harry Olds sat down.

But no one else got up. The preacher stamped his foot, whirled, flung himself on the little organ, pushed it to the middle of the platform, banged the stool down behind it and sat on it. His shoulders and his head were above the top of the organ. He began to pump, swaying from side to side. His whiskers waved on each side of the round yellow knob which was his chin. He shut his eyes, began to sing:

"*Why-y-y not; why-y-y not.*"

The first *why* was loud, the second soft. He did this several times and then he rolled out:

"*Why-y-y not come to him no-o-o-w? Why-y-y not! Why-y-y not! Why not come to him now!*"

He stopped pumping and playing, without getting up looked around sadly and said in a low, low voice:

"*Why* not? *Why* not? *Why* not, beloved? *Why* not come to him now?"

Then he slowly got up, covering his eyes with one hand and with trembling steps came close to the front of the platform. Suddenly he uncovered his eyes, lifted them, shook his head slowly.

"Why not, dear Lord?" he said and stood with his eyes upturned to the ceiling, while everything was still.

Ella Martin was still and the boy behind her.

And then a boy in a row of five or six across the aisle from Ella and Lillian sprang to his feet.

"I'm not ashamed, fellows," he said, "I'm not ashamed to say I've decided for the Lord."

He sat down and another jumped up.

"I—I—" his voice was low and deep and trembled, "I—Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief."

The preacher did not say anything. He looked at those young college men sitting there in a row.

Another stood up. "I was in the same boat with Jack here," he said, "I—I doubted. Now—I—believe."

Then the preacher began again. He did not shout. You had to lean forward and keep your ears open to hear him.

"This has been a blessed, a holy hour," he said, "and now in this solemn hush, let us plead with the *sinners*, those who have never surrendered their hearts, to come forward to this blessed altar and give up. Simply say, dearly beloved, 'Lord, I believe', like that blessed young man here tonight, and the Lord will do the rest. Won't you come? Won't you come?" He nodded his head a little and a few women began to sing, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way."

Other women began to come walking down the aisle. Women with plain wrinkled faces and blackish crooked hats. They looked at people, begging them. The singing

went on. The preacher talked, his voice now above, now below the singing.

Suddenly Lillian put her head with the red fez on top of her brown waves of hair down in her hands. Her throat ached. Something was beating, beating, beating, in her body, tearing it, hurting it, warming it, giving it pain that was sweeter than any joy. Now the people were singing, "*Why-y-y not? Why-y-y-not?*" Tears came pouring from her eyes. Sobs tore their way out of her.

An arm came around her, a thin old arm, pulled her up from the bench, drew her along, knees sticking out, walked her up the aisle, pushed her down so that she knelt. "Are you sorry for your sins?" a woman whispered against her ear.

"Yes, oh, yes," Lillian sobbed. The arm held her firmly down over the wooden altar.

Oh, those young men. Oh, those young men, with their trembling lips, their burning eyes, their interlocking hands with the white knuckles sticking out. Oh, their voices quivering. Oh, their eyes, their eyes.

The meeting came to be over. Arms raised Lillian. The big preacher put his great hand out and she laid hers in it and looked up at him. Her face felt suddenly cold, because it had been so hot with her arms over it and her tears on it.

"God bless you!" the preacher said, but he was looking over her head and then he went on and said "God bless you!" to a little grey man and two children sitting on the front bench quietly, not having been crying or anything.

A young man with squinty eyes and a long nose came and said to Lillian:

"Please give me your name and address, your age, your parents' names."

He wrote her name down in a black book with other names. The preacher came and looked over the young man's shoulder and said, "Well, how many does that make?" He frowned. "You counted 'em up right?"

A girl came to the young man. "Aren't you ready to go?" she asked.

"In a minute," he said.

"Well, hurry up!"

An old woman came up to Lillian. The woman kissed her. "I used to know your Grandmother," she said. "Now don't forget to tell your mother. She will be so happy. Tell her tonight."

Lillian nodded. Mother would be — happy?

"Haven't you anybody to go home with?" the woman said.

Lillian looked around the almost empty chapel. Her face felt stiff. It was swollen. "Ella Martin," she began.

"Well, she seems to be gone. Edmund. Oh, Edmund, couldn't you and Rena May take this little girl home? You go right past the house."

The young man hesitated. "Yeah. We can take her home." This was the young man who wrote names down.

The young man walked between Rena May and Lillian. He took hold of Lillian's arm. No one had ever done that before. But this was just the man who wrote names down. Didn't it feel, though — strange?

She went into the dark quiet house. Her mother's door was open.

"Lock the front door," said her mother.

Lillian went back and slipped the bolt across the front door. Then she felt her way to her mother's door again. She stood there. It was dark. The baby made a little snuffling noise.

"I got converted," Lillian said.

Her mother did not say anything. The springs only made a snapping sound. Lillian stood a moment longer in the dark.

Then she went up the narrow dark stairs, being careful about the holes in dead Grandmamma's worn out carpet.

She lighted a little smoky lamp. She looked in the wavy glass of the dresser. She saw a red face, eyes that were bright, almost black. It did not seem quite her own face. Had something happened to it? She turned her head this way and that way, with the fez on and then with the fez off. She bent close and put her chin in her hands.

After a while she took her clothes off and put the light out. She walked on the littered floor over to the bed where Trixie was asleep. She got down beside the bed for her prayers. She said, "Now I lay me down to sleep." She went on and said, as usual, "Bless Papa and Mamma and all my sisters and brothers. Forgive my sins." Sins. Sins. Sins. She was sleepy.

And then she was in bed with her eyes shut. Oh, white faces, burning eyes, voices shaking, shaking, speaking of doubting, of believing.

"Oh, oh, God." She put her arms out — to God.

Wanting to stay awake, she went to sleep.

In school the next day she did not read. She put her head down on the desk and partly shut her eyes. The slamming of books, the shuffling, the droning and whispering, were a wall. Behind that wall she sat, her cheeks feeling warm, her heart shaking her with its hard beating.

She started away from school, alone, as she always did, the fez on her head, her brown waves and curls of hair moving as she went. And then strangely, a girl came and walked with her. The girl put her arm around her! She talked.

"I do think Nellie Clymer 'n' Maggie Benson 're the meanest old things. They're gone on the boys. Don't you say they are? I ain't ever goin' to speak to Nellie Clymer 'n' Maggie again, cross my heart 'n' hope to die I ain't. Are you Lillie?"

"No," Lillian said, but she was thinking about the book under the girl's — Cora Glasscock's — arm. "Cap —" she could see. Could it be *Capitola the Madcap*, untorn, all of it?

And then Cora said, "You c'n read my book if you wanta. It's a dandy book." She handed the book over to Lillian and it was *Capitola the Madcap*.

"Co-ra! Co-ra! Wait a minute! C'm here!"

"'lo, Nellie! 'lo, Maggie." Cora's arm dropped from Lillian. She ran toward Nellie Clymer and Maggie Benson.

Lillian waited a moment. Cora hadn't been going to speak to Nellie and Maggie, cross her—. But the girls put their arms around each other, Cora in the middle, and stared at Lillian's *hat*. They began to laugh and ran across the street.

Lillian went along on the bricks toward home.

But some people were on the porch of dead Grand-mamma's house, looking in through the glass of the door. Oh, it was the big preacher, and a woman was with him, a woman with long black skirts and a brown jacket and a big hat with a feather sticking up from it.

Lillian ran up to the porch, her hair streaming over her shoulders. She smiled at the two waiting in front of the door. The preacher said:

"Is your mawther at home?"

Lillian nodded.

"What book is that? Let me see. Ah!"

Lillian felt hot under the black eyes of the preacher, under the small grey eyes of the woman. She gave the preacher *Capitola the Madcap*.

"Is your mother moving today?" the woman asked.

Lillian shook her head, looked into the front room through the glass of the door.

Moving?

Oh, my, a fort. Tennyson and Beatrice and Murillo had made a fort.

"I'll open the door," she said and ran around the house.

How the preacher was frowning about *Capitola the Madcap*. How his wife was frowning about the fort.

Mamma was sewing on the old machine that roared and shook the house so she could not hear knocking on the front door. Lillian ran to the front room, began to lift books: *Concordances*, *Flavius Josephus*, *Night Scenes from the Bible, Illustrated*. She moved chairs down from the great pile, and stools, pulled tables. She smiled through the glass sometimes. But the preacher and the preacher's small wife under her hat with the sticking-up feather did not smile.

Well, the preacher came in, then the preacher's wife. The preacher's wife brushed a chair off a little, sat down, her lips together. The preacher sat in the biggest chair, a base-rocker. This made Lillian feel anxious. The big chair looked strong, but if you leaned back far it would turn a somersault.

The house was not quiet. Somewhere Tennyson and Beatrice were, and that big freckled boy from across the alley. But Lillian did not yet know where they were.

The preacher cleared his throat, loudly. "I would like to speak to your mawtherrr," he said.

Mamma came to the door. She smiled a little. The preacher held his hand out. He did not get out of the base-rocker. Mamma did not see the hand. She sat down on the edge of a chair full of books. She did not say anything, sat looking away, smiling a little.

The preacher said, "Ahem!" He seemed, from the movings of his mouth to be saying more. But Lillian was not sure. Because of Tennyson and Beatrice and Murillo and the freckled boy from across the alley. She knew now where they were. They were in the cellar. The cellar was under the front room. Lillian knew what they were doing. They were being pirates. The cellar had water in it. Some of dead Grandmamma's fruit jars with no fruit in them went bobbing around on the water, were whales and sharks. Rotten apples, brown and squashy, floating, were buoys warning of rocks and reefs. The fruit-cupboard was Yokohama, the steps were New York, a table Calcutta. Tennyson had heard Papa lec-

turing about these. Big steamers sailed between these ports. Tubs were the steamers. The pirates were screaming and laughing and yelling, bumping the tubs against things, howling. They were having a good time,

The preacher took a breath, opened his mouth, tried to down the pirates. "We have come to talk about your daughter's soul."

Lillian heard him say this. But Mamma could not hear him. She smiled a little, shook her head. No, she had not heard.

The preacher took another breath. His face was getting red.

"Your daughter reads novels. She reads this." He held out *Capitola the Madcap*.

Mamma got up and took it, quickly. She sat down farther away.

The preacher looked at Mamma with *Capitola the Madcap* under her blue wrapper arm. He seemed surprised, batted his eyes, his mouth hanging open.

The pirates were having a battle.

The preacher's wife threw up her head. Her nose wiggled. Perhaps she sniffed, but no one could hear because of the pirates. The preacher's wife suddenly jumped up from the chair she was sitting on. Spots of purplish red were on her face. She went and began to pull at the preacher. But the preacher had not finished calling at this house yet. And was a woman, were two women, to be telling him it was time to go on? The preacher reared back from his wife, away back in the base-rocker that turned somersaults. The base-rocker began to go over backward. The preacher's heels beat against it. His hands waved in the air. There was something like a shout, a man's big loud shout, above the noise of the pirates. Well, his wife could not save him. She pulled at his knees, snatched at his trousers, at last got a good hold of his shoes. But the preacher was big and the chair had to go on over, now it had started. Lil-

lian knew that. The preacher's wife did not stop trying to save him. She was pretty strong. She reached up and up and bent over, keeping the big black shoes in her brown mittened hands. The preacher's head was lost down in behind the chair that you could see only the torn red carpet seat of. His head was down among concordances and things. The preacher could stand on his head, his wife helping him so.

At last there was a choked yelling even pirates could not down. "Le'go! Lemme go! Le' go!"

The big black feet kicked hard, kicked the preacher's wife's hands loose. They waved in the air a minute, those long, wide, thick feet, and then they were gone. The chair came slamming back into position again. Pretty soon the preacher crawled out from beside it, a brown apple-core in his mussed up black hair and wads of grey dust in his whiskers. His black necktie was unhooked, his shiny tall collar unbuttoned and getting in the way of his teeth. The preacher's face was red, very red, except the chin of it between the two pieces of black whisker. The chin was yellow and it wiggled.

Shrieking and bumping and laughing and screaming came from the Pacific Ocean under the floor.

The preacher's wife stamped her feet and moved her head up and down, but what she said no one could know.

Well, now the preacher had finished his call. He was ready to go. His wife hunted around and found his high black hat. She took hold of his sleeve and pulled him around books and tipped-over chairs toward the door.

Mamma walked a little way, tall and straight in her long blue wrapper, looking kindly at guests going, her face quite white, her blue eyes pretty, sad.

Mamma pushed the bolt across the door when the preacher and his wife were out. Her lips would not be still and a small spot of red was on each of her cheeks.

The baby was crying in a big rocking-chair in the dining-room with pillows in it, its bed.

The pirates had declared a truce perhaps.

"Is this your book?" Mamma said, holding out *Capitola the Madcap*.

"I — was reading it. Is is — is it — could I finish it?"

"It's trash. But I guess — comparatively — it's innocuous. Go and take the baby up."

Mamma went to the cellar door and called the children. They must come up out of that damp place. She told Tennyson and Beatrice to put the books where they belonged off the floor in the front room.

Lillian took up the baby and held her. What a funny smell a clean, rather new baby had. The baby made little noises against her.

She heard Tennyson shouting:

"Hurray! Bread 'n' butter 'n' maple syrup for supper if we get this mess cleaned up."

"Oh-h-h! Not mush!" Lillian put her cheek down on the baby's little tickly warm head.

Mamma came.

Lillian smiled at Mamma. Mamma smiled at her. Then Mamma began to laugh, standing close to Lillian. She laughed so much she could not take the baby. And Lillian laughed. They both clutched at the poor baby, their bodies touching, the baby between them while they laughed, hard, till they were weak, looking into each other's eyes.

And Lillian while she laughed thought of something. She thought of going into the front room, to the organ. She wanted to play the organ. She wanted to play that last piece in the Instruction Book. You pulled out all the stops in that piece, and you pushed the knee swells out and you pumped fast. That piece was loud and grand. Its name was "The Gloria from Mozart's Twelfth Mass."

THE YOUNGER RIDGE-ROAD MEN

By JAY G. SIGMUND

The younger ridge-road men have lost
The skill to make a helve or yoke:
They cannot tell the older tales
That have delighted older folk.

They know the haunt of fox and mink
But do not know the bait to use,
And few of them when autumn comes
Would know the size of trap to choose.

At night around the ruddy stove
They listen to the blacksmith tell
Of his philandering and fights,
Of how he welds an axle well.

They hear of how their fathers cursed
And how their grandsires leveled elms:
Of how they came from other shores
In ships with tempest-battled helms.

But younger ridge-road men will smile,
Then tap their foreheads . . . jibe and grin
And veer the stoveside talk around
To later styles of toil and sin.

The grizzled ridge-road men agree
The younger ones are soft these days:
They cannot hew a helve or yoke—
They even sin the softer ways!

SUMMER RESORT

By THOMAS W. DUNCAN

The lake blazed brightly blue. The lithe springboard
Sagged with his weight. He gulped deep, crouched, and
soared

Like a white arrow toward the copper sun,
Muscle his back into an arc, and spun
Breathlessly downward. His curved body cut
Like a flung scimitar, a clean-hewn rut
Through the sun-spangled air. The water parted.
He was a bronze spear, plunging. Minnows darted
Out of his hissing wake. A liquid green
World sheathed his tense, poised muscles. Piercing,
keen,

Long under-surface ripples lapped his flesh.
Lances of shattered sunlight, caught in a mesh
Of darkening, opaque water shimmered and melted.
A covey of fish, loose-mouthed and orange-belted,
Blankly gaped at his slackening speed.

He churned
Down and still down . . . to the floor, where yellow sand
burned

Like gold dust spilled from iron-bound chests of loot
Fierce blood-sashed pirates had plundered.

Like silver fruit
Clusters of sparkling bubbles swarmed from his lips,
Languidly floating upward through wavering strips
Of dribbling light.

And then his chest was bursting!
And every lung-cell shrieked that it was thirsting
For air—sweet air! Clean air! He shot up . . . up!
Crashed through the surface, gasping; gulped the cup
Of quenching air. Sunlight was brown and hot.
He whooped and pounded down the apricot
Shore sand; stopped short; heard shrilling—dim . . . for-
lorn —

The chill thin silver of a tragic horn.

WEATHER FORECAST

By DOREN THARP

I

The sun went to bed with a dirty face
tonight.
The sun went to bed like a naughty boy
with a 'strawberry-jam face.
Tomorrow there'll be rough weather. . . .

II

The weary sun steps over the horizon;
At last!
All night he's climbed, and his face is red.
He calls:
 Heee-ah! Heee-ah!
And his two red dogs trot over on either flank.
The farm-boy blows out his lantern and chants:
 "Sun-dogs at night
 Sailor's delight
 Sun-dogs in the morning
 Sailors take warning."

III

You've heard of a blue-moon,
And a moon made of green cheese,
And you've heard of a wishing moon.
But this is no moon like these.
This is an Indian moon,
Bent like a heavy ash war-bow,
Curved like a quarter of yellow squash.
When a quiver of flint-tipped arrows
 will hang on either horn
It means something.
There'll be no rain this moon. . .
There'll be strength in the grass this month.

TWO POEMS

By JEAN BEARDSLEE

MULES

Little black mules
Patient as heaven—
And stubborn as hell,
Dragging the great rake.
They turn inquisitive heads
And roll questioning eyes
At the driver who yells "whoa!"

Why whoa?
They droop their heads in meditation,
But before an answer is found
In their fumbling brain,
The driver yells "Giddap!"
And they move forward
Shivering the horseflies
From their glistening hides
And kicking yellow jackets
From the fallen clover.

And the man from the North says,
"Mules ! Bah ! Who wants 'em?"
And the man from the South says,
"Mules — the best team God ever made!"

And the mules, knowing the truth,
Stare straight ahead
And say nothing.

THE RED BARN

The old red barn is a gay vagabond
Sitting on the rich hillside

With the careless nonchalance
Of an American in a Paris salon.
His square eyes twinkle with candor,
His grinning mouth
Munches sweet red clover and alfalfa,
While the beauty of a hundred noisy blackbirds
Tangles his rough-shingled head,
And a red-headed woodpecker
Scratches his back until
He squirms in delicious satisfaction.
His sides shake with laughter
When the wind blows,
And his hair falls, leaving bald spots—
But the old red barn never worries;
His blessings and his misfortunes
Are alike the gifts of Man;
He welcomes each new-born harvest
With the glad abandon of youth,
And forgets the rains and the winter.

IN A DIFFERENT GUISE

By MILDRED FOWLER FIELD

If death should have swift need of me,
Let him come swinging a quick scythe —
A haymaker in old brown overalls.
There would be meaning in it then,
With laughter in the fields and white sail shadows
Over the blue sea meadows wavering:
With clover odor and a soft green sound.
It would be sweet to go when gracious harvest
Broods like forgotten music on the earth,
Sweeter than sweet to fall
Mown singing into white clover.

ONLOOKERS

By PAUL F. COREY

They came across Greenwich Avenue where Tenth Street runs obliquely past the Jefferson Market jail—two young men, both in their late twenties. It was a Saturday evening in early August, one of those occasional temperate evenings which bring relief to a sun-tortured city. Down the walk they strolled, opposite the tiers of barred windows, toward Sixth Avenue.

"And her father has a head like a French water jug," the taller of the two was saying, inconsequentially. "He eats breakfast in his stockinged feet and dips bread in his coffee." The speaker was slender, a bit stooped, and his serious face made him look older than his companion.

"I thought you didn't know the family," said his friend, more stocky in build and with a sandy moustache straight-trimmed. He thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets, making each side of his coat-front bulge, drawing the back in a tight line across the hips.

"Well—I don't," admitted the other.

They were passing the two brick posts at the entrance of Patchin Place. The stooped young man paused and glanced up at a certain lightless window beneath the brooding foliage of an ailanthus tree. He observed carelessly that a well-known writer and lecturer, who lived up there, must have gone to the country for the hot weather, because his window was dark. As this observation induced no remarks from his companion, he asked, "Where is the place you're having your stick repaired?"

"Around the corner on Sixth Avenue." The shorter of the two nodded his head slantwise up the street, then stopped abruptly, exclaiming, "What's the excitement down that way—by the Elevated?"

Each tried to grasp the meaning of the commotion in a quick survey. Two white-aproned clerks ran across

the street from the delicatessen store in the middle of the block. Several people on the other side of Sixth Avenue hurried in the direction of a point somewhere along the east-fronting of the jail. A hatless individual dashed out of the drugstore, carrying a glass. Others stared. The real cause of the agitation was hidden from their view.

"A domestic case being taken to the Jefferson Court," speculated the stooped young man. "The woman has broken loose from her guard and has knocked her husband down on the sidewalk."

They continued with quick steps, heading diagonally over the pavement to the walls of the jail. The one said nothing, but stroked his sandy moustache until he smiled. The face of the other became less serious and he looked up at the clock-tower. It was nine-thirty. The belfry and the slender shaft, with its girths of barred portals, rising at the other corner of the building, were silhouetted against the night by a half-moon, appearing like the first and little fingers of a great hand pointing upward, with the middle two folded down. The glistening, pointed roofs were like well manicured nails.

They rounded the corner briskly. A crowd had gathered about midway down the east side of the building. It increased rapidly, fed with inquisitive people. The young men approached and mingled with the fringe of stretching, craning spectators.

"A fight," suggested the young man with the moustache.

But members of the gathering spoke with hushed voices, peering over and under and between the arms and shoulders of those nearer the object of curiosity. The two twisted their way in, and distinguished, through the lattice-work of bodies in front of them, the figure of a man lying on the walk with his head and shoulders propped against the wall of the jail.

"Bad liquor," said the stooped young man.

Above the mumuring of the crowd they heard the frantic breathing of the sufferer. Standing on tiptoe they could see better. Someone was holding a glass of water to the tight-drawn lips of the unfortunate man. White flakes of foam spat from his dilated nostrils at every gasping expiration of the breath. His features were saffron coloured, and bulging eyes stared from beneath shaggy locks of disheveled hair. Hands like bleached bone clutched and tore at his soiled shirt-front, trying to get at the flesh above the heart. He groaned a little.

The two young men fell back and were pushed aside by other curious individuals. A policeman stood near by, making notes in his little black book. He put it away quickly and looked anxiously up and down the avenue.

"Has an ambulance been called?" he asked.

"Yes, five minutes ago," said the drug clerk at his elbow.

Other scraps of conversation reached the ears of the two.

"He fell right down in the middle of the street."

"Heart attack."

"Does anyone know who he is or where he lives?" asked the policeman.

There was no reply.

Someone said: "He had a bag of groceries. He must live near here."

"What's the matter? Heart attack?" asked a newcomer.

"He fell right down in the middle of the street," said a woman with a loaf of bread, "right by that elevated track post. They carried him over here."

"Very bad case," said the policeman, shaking his head.

A train roared above them, throwing a brief flash of yellow over the crowd. The young men moved away up the street.

"We might as well get your stick," said the one.

"Heart attack — bad stuff," said the other. "It gets their wind. They can't breathe. A man like that ought to get out of New York. This is no place for him. He needs air."

"He'd get lonesome anywhere else," replied his companion.

They walked a space in silence, crossed Tenth Street and followed along the line of shops.

"Poor devil!" sympathized the young man with the sandy moustache. "I suppose he has a family some place around here."

His friend made no answer. They came to a little shop where umbrellas and parasols stood in wooden racks outside the door and an assortment of walking sticks hung in the windows. A few boxes of hand-rolled cigars were displayed to the right of the entrance, and beyond this parapet of merchandise a dim figure crouched over a little bench, his brown hands rolling brown leaves.

A thinnish old man, with a tuft of gray hair on the lobe of each ear, arose from a stool in the corner and greeted them. He regarded the two over the top of his spectacles, recognized the one with the moustache, and passing into a latticed-off compartment to the left of the entrance, beckoned him to follow. Against the wall of this little workroom stood an idle lathe and buffer, and a row of broken and repaired pipes lined a shelf. The young man waited, carefully fingering his moustache, while the shopkeeper sought his stick among others on a rack.

With his back to the shop the companion remained in the doorway, lifting his grave face to the dark distance above the city. The incident by the jail vividly recurred to him. The man was probably a day-laborer, doing odd jobs in a factory. It wasn't much of a job, whatever he did, the stooped young man concluded.

He continued his interpolation, widening his circles of

speculation. The stricken man lived with his wife and four or five children in a two-room flat over a cobwebby store on Fourteenth or Fifteenth Street. Two beds in the living room and one in the kitchen, that's the way they arranged things.

The wife did cleaning in the office buildings on Wall Street during odd hours. The oldest child, a girl, quite a pretty girl he imagined, took care of the flat and cooked the meals. A boy, next in age, sold papers on Broadway at Twenty-third Street. Another boy polished shoes in Washington Square, wandering from corner to corner and from side to side of the park, with his dirty little box slung over his shoulder by a strap. "Good shine or no pay." The other children were too small to do anything but make trouble.

This evening the mother was too tired to go for the groceries. The daughter was having her third sick-time, so the father took the marketing sack and set out to do the shopping. He made his purchases: a bunch of carrots, five pounds of potatoes, six onions, a cabbage, a cube of oleomargarine, and a loaf of bread — stew for Sunday dinner. His task finished, he started at an angle across Sixth Avenue to shorten the way home.

His work had been heavy that day. He hadn't finished until after six o'clock. Several times during the afternoon he felt faint and light-headed. It should have been a warning. Now he was almost to the criss-cross shadows of the elevated tracks. It would be so nice to get home and rest. Then his malady struck him. A jagged projectile seemed to burst in his chest. He felt as if he were being choked; air was so hard to get. The market bag dropped to the pavement with a squashy sound; an onion tumbled out and rolled a little way. His hands were trying to get at this thing that hurt him. They clutched, they tore, they found flesh. A brilliant light flashed down at his eyes and he fell in the street, right by the steel post of the elevated tracks.

All this had happened many times before, but this might be the last time . . .

The young man's thoughts were interrupted by an overhead train thundering past. His companion had finished examining the repaired stick by this time. He paid the bill and joined him in the doorway.

"Much better now," he said, twirling it in his hand.

"What did you have done to it?" asked his friend.

"A new ferrule — bone instead of metal."

The stooped young man took the stick, inspected it, tested it against the cement, walked a short distance with it and returned it to its owner.

"Very good," he said, "but it's too light and short for me."

They began to retrace their steps.

"The crowd's still there," said the one with the stick, looking down the avenue. "Maybe the poor devil has died."

The inquiring and sympathizing group had thinned somewhat by the time they rejoined it. People, having fed their curiosity, had moved on. The policeman walked nervously among the remaining observers, cast a grudging glance at the figure on the sidewalk, then looked furtively up and down the street.

"No ambulance yet?" he said, brusquely.

"They've been called three times," said a bystander.

The policeman muttered something under his breath. The two young men pushed closer toward the sick man to see how he was holding out. He still groaned a little and clutched at his chest and throat. The flakes of foam at his nostrils were becoming a faint pink.

"Poor devil," said the one.

The face of the other was grave; his intent eyes stared at the unfortunate figure against the building. The idea had suddenly struck him that the man might die there before his eyes. He had never seen a person die and the possibility of actually witnessing the finish of a life fasci-

nated him. In this case, he felt, it would be almost like watching an animal die; a sudden twitching, a contracting of the muscles, a gasp, the eyeballs starting from their sockets, then a quick relaxation . . . dead.

The sharp brr-ing of a gong startled the waiting crowd and the ambulance swung around the corner of Tenth Street, its dim red lights flushing the faces turned toward it. Close up to the curb it pulled with another furious clanging, and two attendants sprang out. One carried a little bag, the other a rolled-up canvas stretcher. The watchers made a narrow lane for them to pass down and closed in behind for the verdict. The two stood for an instant regarding the prostrate figure, their white uniforms conspicuous, then knelt beside him.

A tense silence stooped with the bystanders, and waited. One attendant tipped up the drooping chin and looked into the staring eyes, while the other sought for a faint pulse beat in the cement-gray wrist. The one with the bag opened it quickly, removed a stethoscope, and fitting the tubes into his ears pulled back the man's shirt and placed the instrument over the heart, listening. He shifted the metal cone from place to place on the bony chest. The crowd was almost breathless with suspense. Then he shook the apparatus from his ears and replaced it in the bag.

The uniformed men exchanged a few words. The groaning and gasping of the patient continued. A cold white face, in the ring of observant faces about the three, leaned still closer. A bent ear caught a brief sentence from the attendant with the bag. "It's a bad case." The stooped young man wedged his way tighter between the bodies in front of him, keeping his gaze fixed on the drawn features of the face by the wall. A fear that the fellow might die and that he would miss a few details of the final paroxysms held him transfixed.

A few more words passed between the attendants, then one stepped to the man's left leg and straightened it out.

He pulled up the dirty gray trousers above the knee and shoved the brown sock down to the ankle. The other handed him a bottle and a piece of cotton from the bag. The cotton grew dark as he tipped the bottle into it. A faint odour of iodine drifted up to sniffing nostrils. The attendant grasped the leg and vigorously rubbed a spot as large as the palm of the hand on the blue-veined calf. It became black against the whiteness of the flesh, like dried blood.

His associate was busy with a hypodermic needle. He shook the instrument swiftly several times. Little sparks of light sprang from the glistening cylinder as it moved up and down. The plunger was shoved tight against the base of the instrument; afterwards it was held up for inspection, then filled. The attendant knelt, and taking the iodined patch of muscles between his thumb and forefinger, squeezed the flesh into a lump. The limb quivered. He poised the needle, tested the skin, and with a quick, deep jab emptied the syringe. The leg jerked a little and was still again.

The stooped young man had a feeling that the sight was going to make him sick. He shifted his position, diverted his thoughts a moment, and threw the nausea off. The man might die yet. He watched more closely but the patient seemed neither better nor worse. He was chewing his fingers. They were becoming red.

One of the uniformed men spoke a few words to the policeman, while the other unrolled the stretcher. They picked the limp body up and placed it on the smooth brown canvas. One at his head and one at his feet, they lifted him. The crowd parted again and they moved slowly toward the open doors of the ambulance, the bared leg as pale as death beneath the streetlight.

The two young men worked their way out of the throng and turned west on Tenth Street in the direction they had come. The stick with the new bone ferrule tapped swankily on the walk.

"He's in a bad shape," said the one.

"He didn't die after all," said the other. "I have never seen a man die."

The sick feeling in his stomach revived and he walked along the curbing.

THE POET SURVEYS HIS GARDEN

By LOREN C. EISELEY

Within this acre riots the spent wind.

The slow worm bores the soil and feasts by night.

My eager beans, by tiny scissors thinned,

The caterpillar owns by squatter's right.

And stalks are cut. Things rasp from tree to tree.

By singing desolation I am bound.

Who owns a garden should not ever be

Indulgent with small people of the ground.

Yet some are poets in their curious ways

And take just payment for their singing worth.

Let other men, accustomed to drab days,

Begrudge them fruitage of the laboring earth.

I find most dear to this dark heart of mine

The gaudy bug parading on the vine.

A POT OF BULBS

By MARY KATHARINE REELY

With her fingers barely pausing on her typewriter keys, Miss Kelley lifted her eyes from her copy and gave Miss Morgan a long level look under her lashes. Miss Morgan returned the look, then dropped her eyes discreetly to the record card she was annotating. Miss Kelley's fingers played on with her keys, but she continued for a moment longer to observe Miss Hemingway before turning her own eyes back to her work.

Miss Hemingway had just come into the room, bearing in her hands a flat earthenware bowl in which six brown bulbs stood upright among pebbles. Miss Hemingway held the bowl a little above elbow height, her eyes fixed on the six bulbs, the lines about her usually stern mouth relaxed.

Miss Kelley's look at Miss Morgan had said, "What did I tell you? Now you watch!" Miss Morgan watched furtively, between pen strokes.

Miss Hemingway stood in front of the window holding the pot of bulbs in her hands. She elevated it to the height of her eyes, peering in at the roots. She balanced the bowl on one hand and moved the pebbles gently with her finger. Her face showed satisfaction. She turned her back to the two occupants of the office, moved away from the window and placed the bowl on the sectional book case that held the school reports.

Miss Morgan laid the record card aside, picked up another from the pile at her left hand, lifted her eyes and met Miss Kelley's level gaze. Miss Kelley's fingers began suddenly to tap faster. Miss Morgan bent over her record. Miss Hemingway, having placed the bowl to her satisfaction, moved it slightly forward, and pulled the window shade to adjust the light, turned again and moved majestically toward the inner office. At the doorway, she paused, turned. Miss Kelley reached for her pad and

pencil, but Miss Hemingway in her sharp, clipped voice, said "Miss Morgan!" and passed through her doorway.

Laying her records aside, Miss Morgan rose deliberately. "I'll have you know I take my orders from the school doctor," Miss Morgan had a way of saying to Miss Kelley. "I'm not under *her* thumb." She walked across the room, intercepting as she passed, a meaningful glance from under Miss Kelley's eyelids. "But you go when she calls, just the same," Miss Kelley's eyes said. "I don't take orders from her for all that," replied Miss Morgan's uplifted chin.

Miss Kelley's typewriter keys tap-tap-tapped, but above and between the metallic clatter the conversation from the inner room assailed Miss Kelley's ears.

"That Chechek boy — I met him in the hall — he was to have been sent home."

"Just a slight nose infection — not sick at all — I'm treating him here — "

"— to be sent home — immediately — an absolute rule of the school — a slight infection — menace to every person in the building — only one way to stamp out colds, Miss Morgan, nip them *in* the bud!"

"— but in this case — virtually no home to go to — mother works — no fire in the house — he'll be really sick. I can't send him there — under the circumstances."

"The case is attended to, Miss Morgan. I spoke to his room teacher. He is on his way now."

Miss Morgan came out of the office. Her face was flushed. Her mouth set. "I'll speak to the doctor about it," she was saying. "He may be able to make arrangements at the hospital." She stressed the final word. Miss Hemingway's cool imperturbable voice followed her. "The proper place for the child, Miss Morgan."

Miss Morgan sat down at her desk and began making sharp, staccato jabs with her pen at the record cards. Miss Kelley's keys tapped rhythmically. This continued for several minutes after Miss Hemingway, issuing pon-

derously from the inner office, had passed out of the room and down the hallway. Miss Morgan bunched her cards together and shoved them into the drawer of her desk. She pushed back her chair and stood up. Miss Kelley's hands rested on the keys.

"Who's she picking on this morning? — That Daley girl, most likely," Miss Kelley answered her own question.

"That third grade teacher? She's having a hard time, isn't she?"

"Yeh, she's new this year, and scared, and the old dame knows it, and picks on her. She does, you know, on the scared ones. And if they're pretty, so much the worse." Miss Kelley ran a complacent hand through her bobbed red mop.

"How come you stayed here so long?" Miss Morgan turned to the coat locker.

"I'm not scared," said Miss Kelley, "and she knows it."

Miss Morgan slipped into her muskrat coat and pulled a blue turban down over her blond hair.

"Going out?" Miss Kelley ignored the obvious.

"Yeh," Miss Morgan stood powdering her nose. "Got some follow-up cases for the doctor."

"Nice day to be out," observed Miss Kelley. "Cold for this time of year though."

"Yeh, cold but nice." Miss Morgan fastened the collar of her coat. Miss Kelley's eyes were directed to the book case. "What do you make of it?" she asked.

"Of what?"

"Those bulbs. How dippy she is!" Miss Kelley leaned back in her chair, her legs stretched. "First it goes there," she said, pointing to the book case, "where the sun doesn't strike. Then to the top of the filing cabinet, and then — But you just watch, you haven't seen half. And if one of us so much as touched it!"

"Humph," sniffed Miss Morgan. "I take my orders from the doctor around this place."

"It begins with paper whites in the fall," continued Miss Kelley, "and keeps up till hyacinths." Then, "How about the Chechek kid?" she asked irrelevantly.

"I'm looking in on him," said Miss Morgan crisply and left the room.

The next day continued cold and Miss Morgan spent the morning with the school doctor, examining tonsils. She came into the office just before noon, still in her white uniform. She nodded her head toward the Principal's office. "Out?" she asked.

Miss Kelley looked her reply. "All morning. Sitting in on some poor victim again, I suppose." Miss Kelley shoved back her chair with energy, with one motion shot her typewriter down into its cavity in the desk, restoring the flat top, and stood up.

"Well," said Miss Morgan, "I've got a case to report to her, but I can't lose my noon hour."

"Come on then," said Miss Kelley. "Let's eat. Who is it, the what-you-may-call-it kid?"

"Yes. It's just as I thought. He's down sick with a real cold. I found him sitting there in that cold house with his cap and mittens still on, shivering. If I could have kept him here, giving him locals — "

Her voice cut short as Miss Hemingway entered from the hall and passed into her office. After a moment Miss Morgan followed her.

Miss Kelley pulling on her galoshes heard Miss Morgan's voice, high and penetrating; "She's the kind that's afraid of hospitals. Somebody died there. So she's staying at home with him. And losing her job. . . . She's the kind that won't take charity. She's never had to."

Miss Hemingway's voice was suave. It came to Miss Kelley as Miss Morgan opened the door. ". . . no sense in fostering her silly pride. I'll report the case this afternoon."

Miss Hemingway followed Miss Morgan into the main

room shortly. She crossed the room, picked up the pot of bulbs, held it level with her eyes and peered in among the pebbles for the showing of roots.

With a flip of her coon-skin coat Miss Kelley went out the door signalling to Miss Morgan that she would wait outside.

The pot of bulbs had been moved to the filing cabinet. Three inches of pale green shoot had begun to show. Miss Hemingway's fingers touched the brown bulb, pinching it gently, then ran caressingly upward over the rounded bulge already visible at the base of the shoot. Miss Petter, the plump blowsy 6th grade teacher, ambled into the room. She approached Miss Hemingway and her pot of bulbs. "Miss Hemingway," she caroled, "I don't see how you do it. All so even. Mine grow every which way. One way up, the other way down. And then like as not no blossom, all top. But you have a gift, Miss Hemingway. I always say it's a gift."

"Perhaps," said Miss Hemingway pleasantly. "Father had it. A gift with flowers. Father was a doctor, you know, Miss Petter, but his green house was his avocation. My little efforts are nothing."

"Oh, but Miss Hemingway, you do wonderfully. And with all the responsibility you have on your mind!" Miss Petter watched Miss Hemingway admiringly as she replaced the bowl on the cabinet. "And to think that it's inherited," she murmured.

As the two women disappeared in the inner office, Miss Petter at the principal's heels, Miss Kelley, whose keys had not stopped tapping, lifted her eyes and met Miss Morgan's gaze. "Apple sauce," she said between her teeth, and kept on tapping.

Miss Hemingway, coming out of the office after Miss Petter's departure, turned again to her pot of bulbs. She lifted it again, then set it down, her fingers again caressing the bulging contours. One less promising than the others arrested her attention. She turned the pot to

give it the full advantage of the light. She was quite oblivious to the presence of the two girls in the room and while Miss Kelley's keys kept on tapping, Miss Morgan frankly studied the principal's face, noticing the tenderness of the lines about the mouth, the faint smile, the general softening and relaxing of her figure.

"What do you make of it?" Miss Kelley, adjusting a carbon, signalled.

Miss Morgan wrote her reply on a slip of paper, folded it minutely and tossed it onto Miss Kelley's desk, as Miss Hemingway, relinquishing her pot of bulbs with regret, turned to leave the room.

Miss Kelley unfolded the paper and exploded into a sudden gurgle of laughter, as suddenly stifled as she glanced at the door. Miss Morgan stacked her record cards, shook them down into uniformity and prepared to return them to their case.

"You're rich, you are," said Miss Kelley.

Miss Morgan tossed her head with a little satisfied air.

"You certainly are rich," Miss Kelley repeated, at the same time tearing into bits the scrap of paper on which Miss Morgan had written, "Expecting a baby."

Miss Kelley laughed again, and Miss Morgan meeting her eyes joined her. But both checked their mirth when a slim, white faced girl appeared at the door. "Is Miss Hemingway in?"

"No, she just stepped down the hall. Was there something?"

"No . . . no. I just wanted to see her, if I could, before second bell."

"I'll tell her, Miss Daley."

"You needn't mind. I'll come again. Or maybe she'll drop in."

"All right, Miss Daley."

"Maybe she'll drop in! I guess maybe she will, Miss Daley!" The white figure had slipped out and down the hall. "She'll drop in on you good and plenty!" Miss Kelley flipped herself about toward the filing case and

her eyes fell on the bowl of bulbs. "Say but you're rich," she said again, her mind reverting. "You certainly are rich."

The pot of bulbs had been transferred from the top of the filing case to the window sill in full sunlight. The green leaves were six inches high, the blossom buds just topping them. Miss Hemingway yearned over them daily. Miss Petter and her chum, Miss Wadsley, exulted — Miss Hemingway within earshot at her desk, the door open — "Marvelous! How does she do it? Mine run all to tops, and likely no blossoms. Just turn yellow and wither. A gift, my dear. And inherited. From her father. Dr. Hemingway, you know. A wonderful hand with flowers."

"A gift." "Dr. Hemingway!" Miss Kelley mimicked after them.

Miss Morgan kept her records, gave tooth brush drills, tested eyes, and made follow-up calls. Miss Kelley tapped her keys and posted the attendance register. The Chechek boy came back to school and failed to make his grade, and Miss Daley, white faced and sometimes tear-stained slipped in and out of the school building. The first blossom bud burst.

Miss Kelley coming into the room in the morning sniffed the air. "These aren't so bad," she said. "Kind of a delicate smell. It's when she has her hyacinths around, along in March, that I pass out."

"Yeh, these aren't so bad," agreed Miss Morgan unemotionally.

The second blossom bud burst, and the third. By the end of the week the pot had reached its maximum of splendor. With the first cluster just beginning faintly to wither, the sixth and last was coming into flower. "She certainly does know how to bring 'em on," admitted Miss Morgan grudgingly. "You know the only time I ever tried they all ran to tops." Miss Kelley disdained even a glance.

Miss Hemingway coming into the room crossed to her treasure. Miss Morgan watched her. She didn't touch this time with her hands. Only looked. Feasting her eyes, her expression rapt and holy.

An hour later, Miss Morgan returning from her rounds burst into the room. "It's that Daley girl again! I just came from giving a drill there. And everything was all right. The kids as sweet as pie. And then She came in and sat herself down. Like She does. And you could feel it immediately. The change. They turned into a lot of little devils. They know what She's there for. Know She won't do anything to them. And Daley went all flooey. Couldn't hold a piece of chalk, she was shaking so. And there She'll sit and sit!"

Miss Morgan flung herself into her chair, making no pretense at work. "Why do they stand it?" she cried. "I should think every teacher in this building would ask for a transfer. Except Petter, of course, and Wadsley!"

"And that would be the end of them," said Miss Kelley, looking up from her register for the first time during the outburst. "A transfer from this building means the end of a teacher professionally. Such a graft She's got with the main office! Her word's law and gospel. No teacher can say a word in her own defense. 'Not up to the standards of this building.' And that's the end of her. There've been a few who've tried it," she added darkly.

"Well, Daley might better die professionally than some other way. She's a wreck already. Ought to quit and go to a sanitarium."

"She can't," said Miss Kelley laconically. "She's like some of the rest of us. She needs the money. And from what I hear, needs it bad. Family. A mother or something."

In the afternoon Miss Hemingway sat in her office, Miss Kelley and Miss Morgan at their desks. At three o'clock when the lower grades dismissed, a white-faced

shaking Miss Daley tapped at Miss Hemingway's door, was admitted; and it closed behind her.

"I can't stand this," muttered Miss Morgan, suddenly starting to her feet. The conversation in the inner office had been going on for nearly an hour now.

"Wait," cautioned Miss Kelley. "Wait and see." And as Miss Morgan seated herself, the door opened and Miss Daley appeared. She looked shrunken and her drawn little face was ugly with tears. She slipped away down the hall, a handkerchief covering her face.

Miss Hemingway, emerging later, dropped a card on Miss Kelley's desk. "Make a note of this, please, for our records."

She was dressed for the street in the tight fitting coat she had been wearing for years, the mink tippet around her neck. "I'm on my way to the Main Office," she said. Then she stepped over to the window. "Tell the janitor he needn't turn off the heat. We're in for another cold night," and she moved the bowl a few inches back from the pane.

Miss Kelley sat with her eyes on the white card. "Transferred," she said.

"Thank God," breathed Miss Morgan.

"Transferred to a two-room portable out on the edge of things. And there she'll stay and stay and stay, and never be raised and never be promoted because this devil says thumbs down on her."

Miss Morgan slipped into her muskrat coat and pulled down the turban. "Twenty below by morning," she proffered. "You coming?"

Miss Kelley rose slowly. "Yeh," she said, and turned toward the window. "Twenty below," she repeated, "with a wind."

"Guess I left my galoshes in the basement," Miss Morgan said. "I'll join you later."

When Miss Morgan returned she paused in the door in astonishment. "Whew, what's the idea!"

Miss Kelley in her coon-skin coat and neat little hat

and galoshes and wool gloves stood in the middle of the room, the cold wind of the zero evening playing around her from the window where the sash was shoved high.

"What's the i—" began Miss Morgan again, and then her eyes followed Miss Kelley's to the pot of bulbs with their uplifted waxy clusters twisting and bending, and she was silent.

Miss Kelley was silent too as she crossed and lowered and latched the sash, switched off the lights, and followed Miss Morgan out into the hall.

The two girls were at their places as usual in the morning. Miss Kelley sorted attendance cards. Miss Morgan wrote case records. Beyond a brief glance they had not faced each other. "Late this morning," muttered Miss Morgan between closed lips.

"Here, though. I saw her go down the basement stairs."

At Miss Hemingway's step in the hallway, they bent over their tasks. But as the steps came to a pause well within the room, they glanced up together, apprehensively, and then paused, the startled glance of each becoming a fixed stare.

Miss Hemingway stood in the middle of the room. In her two hands she held a flat earthenware bowl with six brown bulbs standing upright among pebbles. She turned the bowl in her hands, lifted it level with her eyes. And then, advancing slowly, placed it carefully on top of the sectional book case. She leaned above it tenderly, her fingers following the brown contours.

She had no eyes for her earlier darlings, bent and yellowed on the window sill.

TWO POEMS

By MOE BRAGIN

STAND NOT GRIEVING

Stand not bitterly grieving
Though they push your hands away,
Spilling the gift you offer
Night and day.

Stand not bitterly grieving
Though they laugh your gift to scorn;
Harden the flesh and spirit
Harder than a horn.

Nothing in this world is wasted;
Watch Time's hands that magic pair
Changing fallen drops and vessels
Into flakes and air.

Long before Time turns the helmet
Of your hair into a wreath
They will breathe the gift you offer
With every breath they breathe.

HARD HEART

The little fly that bugles, finding fruit,
The elephant that pulls up trees,
And girls fair-skinned, red-lipped like you
And flowers that draw rushed flocks of woolly bees

Must fall to earth and wither into dust
Because of death, the fine left hand of God,
Who turns with magic man into a post
And the snake into a rod.

Since I first spelled this legend out to you
As simple as the primers that you teach,
You've turned your weak heart to a pip of stone
With all your flesh clung to it like a peach,
Feeling when the heart is hardened to the world's pain
One heaves out of that left hand's breathless reach.

THE SKETCH BOOK

NEAR TO HER HEART'S DESIRE

By EDITH ROLES JACOBS

Nancy Cranhoft was fifteen years old when a misguided teacher told her she could "write." High school juniors who can command an ordinarily decent use of the language being as rare as they are, the instructor is scarcely to be blamed for growing dazzled beyond prudence when she found that Nancy could be taught the rules of rhetoric. It is true that Nancy had probably never had an original idea in her life, but, as this particular teacher had never had one either, one cannot justly censure her for not observing the lack in the embryonic author.

Nancy was a pretty, ordinary small-town child of forty years ago, who had not heretofore attracted any particular attention at school, and she went home after this pregnant conference so filled with joy and confidence that it was some time before she could explain at all coherently to her parents just what had been told her. Nancy was the adored and unexpected child of a late marriage, and her parents, both people of small learning who cherished regrets over thwarted early ambitions of their own, found no difficulty in believing that Nancy possessed the talent attributed to her.

"My dear little girl," her father said with almost tearful solemnity, "you know we had always intended you to go to Normal, when you're through high school. But that won't be enough now. You'll go to the State University, if it takes all Mother and I have." And Mother, who had never seen or hoped to see either a state university or a genuine live author, awedly and unreservedly agreed.

Nancy occupied without question the position of literary arbiter of her small world as long as she was in high

school. At the University, no teacher told her in trembling, sentimental tones that God had undoubtedly meant her to be a great writer, and the students of her department did not point her out to strangers as the girl who wrote perfect compositions. On the other hand, as she wrote with her old meticulous correctness, and received high marks from teachers who had long ago given up hope of finding originality in any but the most isolated instances, and as she was by nature a person with practically a closed mind, Nancy suffered no disillusionment, and was as confident as ever that the flame of genius burned in her flat little chest.

She was too introspective, too shy and unobservant, to make any intimate friends, although everyone liked her in a general way, and she confided her ambition to but one person, her room-mate, a stout and stolid young person who was majoring in Economics, and whose opinion of authors was so slight that it never occurred to her to mention Nancy's trivial aspiration.

Nancy timidly contributed bits of the verse and fiction which she was always writing to the various college publications, but none of it was ever published, although she may have been right in thinking that her work was as good as most of what was chosen by the youthful editors. Thus she went through college unhonored and unsung, but creditably, and, at twenty, went back home to be the English teacher in the little high school.

She was a faithful, earnest, and utterly uninspired young teacher, and she taught faithfully and earnestly and uninspiredly for nearly thirty years. "My school work always comes first of all," she told everyone in her cheerful, courageous manner.

This was quite true, although she spent many long hours on her beloved writing also. She remained shy all her life, and she was twenty-five years old before she mustered bravery enough to send any of her work to a publisher. She waited in a condition of high nervous tension for nearly two weeks before she received the

manuscript of the story over which she had worked long and hard, and which honestly seemed to her to be one of the best that she had ever read. She did not realize how much she had counted on its being accepted until old Mr. Bales, the postmaster, put the long, fat brown envelope into her hands that wintry November evening. A hot wave of bitter disappointment swept over her so suddenly and so violently that she could hardly answer Mr. Bales' kindly remarks in her customary tones. Once out of the stuffy little office, and alone upon the little by-street that led to her home, she could not keep back the tears, although she was not a woman much given to weeping. She hurried along in the chilly, gray evening, unable, although she tried, to focus her mind upon anything but her pain and defeat.

"I have such a headache, mother," she told the bent, white-haired woman that mother was now, "that I think I'll go straight to bed; I shall not want any dinner." Once in her room, she locked the door, carefully put away her hat and coat, and, with the envelope in her hand, looked gravely at it for some time before she opened it. When at last she slowly ripped it and took out the manuscript, she found, clipped to the top sheet of her beloved story, the polite little printed card of rejection that she was to come to know all too well. But at present Nancy was less downcast, now that she saw the card, than she had been a few minutes before. The mere possession of this card from a magazine which she had been taught to revere, although she seldom read it and was secretly a little bored when she did, seemed to her to establish a connection, however remote, between her and the literary world which she worshipped from afar.

She got hundreds of those cards as the long years went on. She had long ago decided that there was nothing like method for a writer, and she wrote tirelessly, fiercely and conscientiously for exactly two hours before breakfast; for exactly three hours after dinner; and for exactly five hours on Saturday and Sunday, for almost

every day of the next twenty-four years. She had been at the business of writing, sending out and receiving manuscripts, for nearly a decade when she one day opened one to find, penciled on the bottom of the customary rejection slip, "This has possibilities."

Nancy literally came near to fainting with joy. She could hardly have been more elated had the envelope contained a laudatory letter of acceptance, an urgent request for more stories, now, at once, and a large check. Her first collected thought was, "I am so sorry that this couldn't have happened while mother and father were with me."

That evening she had a very hurried meal of tea and cold rolls and preserves. Her evening meals were becoming more and more sketchy since her mother's death; what with grading themes, preparing for her next day's instructing, and fulfilling the few civic and social duties that are expected of even the most retiring small-town teacher, Nancy found it quite hard enough to manage to devote her wonted time to writing, without spending more than a few precious minutes on such mundane matters as the preparation of food.

Tonight she ate, almost unconscious of what she was eating, but hurriedly, too; with her eyes fixed dreamily upon the bleak darkness that stretched beyond the window over the kitchen sink, she washed her few dishes; she put them away neatly and laid a tray for her breakfast. Then she muffled the telephone, went immediately to her room, and spent the entire evening in ruining all the possibilities that her manuscript had. Happily she addressed it again to the same editor, and went to bed with an elation trembling in her that made sleep a very unlikely thing. Of course, the manuscript came back again. This time the editor, undoubtedly meaning to be kind, had written: "We are sorry that this still does not seem to meet our present needs."

Nancy was not disheartened. Did not this statement imply that her story would fill somebody's needs? The

manuscript was sent out tirelessly, mailed back and forth until its creases broke and it had to be re-typed three times, before Nancy gave up and buried it in a little trunk with nearly a thousand others that had gone similar sad journeys.

On the strength of that first mildly encouraging note Nancy had bought a desk with many pigeon-holes and drawers, and a large office filing-cabinet. For years she had had a portion of her father's old secretary; after his death she had had it all. But now she felt that she must have some really efficient equipment, and have it in her room, away from the prying eyes of her few visitors, and safe from the activities of Coral, the negro cleaning woman.

She did now what she had wanted to do for a long time and had never been quite able to bring herself to do; she subscribed to several so-called writers' magazines, and she enrolled with a correspondence school of short-story writing that did a great deal of flamboyant advertising. As her life went on she spent several hundred dollars of her rather meagre salary with these people; their pleasant, flattering letters and vague general criticisms pleased her, and made her feel very competent and business-like. She never doubted them, and more than once wrote humorlessly to them that they had helped her greatly, and that she was sure that only time was necessary for her success.

Of course, it was early rumored that Nancy "wrote;" and, although she never corroborated this in so many words, she certainly never denied it. Her laughing and embarrassed evasions were quite innocent, for she really did work at writing, and she was too honest a person to have been consciously insincere when she implied that she could publish widely if she could bring herself to write the trash which she said most current printed matter was. She did not know how many more capable and sophisticated amateurs than herself had hidden behind this rock-ribbed refuge of an imagined superiority. She

was liked and admired, as pleasant, mediocre people, neither too timid or too aggressive, often are, and no one of all her acquaintances dreamed that she had never had a solitary word published, or that to have something — anything — printed in almost any publication not likely to be interfered with by the government, was her nearest and her fiercest desire.

She lectured sometimes to the literary society on "The Decline of the Modern Stage," although she had never seen a dozen plays in her life; she talked authoritatively and sweetly to the Wednesday club on tendencies of modern literature, although she had read very little of it and not much more of any that preceded it. Indeed, after the meeting, when the ladies were always served tea, she often winningly confided that she read very little nowadays; she couldn't spare the time from her work. And although she was a teacher of English literature, this appalling statement was never known to evoke either amusement or consternation from her hearers, most of them worthy matrons with a sound respect for literature, but with an unspoken conviction that reading was, after all, only to be indulged in when one had nothing else to do.

She had a heartbreaking experience coincident with her forty-second birthday. An editor whom she had bombarded constantly over a period of several years, probably remembering the adage that to be kind one must sometimes be cruel, and steeling himself to act upon it, had written briefly: "I am sorry to say that I see no possibility whatever of any of your work ever finding a place with any of our publications."

Nancy was hurt as a child is hurt when a trusted and beloved adult, in some moment of human impatience, reveals to it that the world is after all not so good as it has always seemed. People only a little more worldly than Nancy's circle might have been amused by her little airs and pretensions and vanities, which increased as she grew older; and by her obvious utter lack of the concep-

tions of life and the understanding which must underlie even the humblest literature. But not the cruelest of them could have been entertained by the sight of poor Nancy on the bitter Saturday morning when that letter came. All day long, while the April rain and wind beat drearily about the house, she lay huddled upon her bed, unable to summon any of the high hopes or childish vanity that had sustained her for so long. She had now none of her happy visions of recognition; of powerful publishers avidly seeking contracts; of stern critics pros- trating themselves before her. However grotesque, the soul disillusioned is not funny, nor is a lonely woman's abandoned grief, whether she weeps for lost beauty or a gallivanting husband, for the child or the god-given gift that she has never had. Poor vain and foolish little Miss Cranhoft was only pitiful, now.

She had rallied a good deal in the morning. After all, Mr. Cairns was not the only publisher in the country. "Even the best authorities sometimes disagree," Nancy comforted herself. "I must have some talent, or I shouldn't keep on wanting to do this so badly. It would have worn itself out long ago if it wasn't the real thing. Poor mother used to say the darkest hour is just before the dawn; something tells me that that terrible letter is just the last bad thing to happen before something really lovely does."

On the following Monday, as she sat scribbling busily at her desk in her deserted classroom, the janitor appeared at the door with an apologetic request. He was a foreigner, lately come to town, and he was humble to the point of rendering himself unintelligible, in spite of a fair knowledge of the language of his adopted country.

"My dog, you know him, Missy Cranhoft? She lost, that dog. Some tell me you write — fine words on the newspaper. Could you — that dog what is lost — I think a lot of that dog — you be so good write for me I give five dollars the guy what brings her back? You do that, please?"

"Of course," said Nancy kindly. "You want a 'lost' ad, don't you?"

"Yeh, I guess. I want my dog back. I give five dollars that dog —"

"I'll attend to it for you, Mr. Suplica."

"Yeh, so I thank you," returned Mr. Suplica, and departed with his broom and dustpan.

On her way home from the newspaper office, Nancy was struck by a speeding out-of-town car. Death, feared at first, did not come to her, but her injuries have rendered her legs useless, and her mind more than a little clouded. She is not insane at all, her friends say, just a little queer. She can read and write and sew, although her writing and her sewing are a little crooked, and she does not remember long at a time what she has read.

She was always a pleasant little thing, but now, in her wheel-chair in the bay-window of the shabby, ornate old house in which she was born, she looks happier and prettier than since the winter when the forgotten teacher, long dead now, told her she could "write."

Friends come endlessly, as they do in small towns where everyone knows everyone else; endlessly they bring salads and jellies and custards, and flowers and books and the intimate news that never reaches the newspaper. And endlessly, before they go — for Nancy collects friends when she sees them, but never remembers that they have been before — they must pretend to be surprised and delighted as Miss Cranhoft casually draws a newspaper from the pocket of her chair, and says with an eager joy her modesty cannot hide:

"Perhaps you would like to look at my last published bit? Some critics have been good enough to call it my masterpiece."

The marked passage, in large black print, is the advertisement for Mike Suplica's lost dog.

THE OLD MAN

BY FRANCES PEARSONS DOLLIVER

From the window over the kitchen sink I could see down our lane to where it joined the main road, forming a huge T. Straggling rows of withered corn stalks paralleled the lane on either side, and a staunch wind was hurrying tumble weeds, that had been lodged in out-of-the-way fence corners, in a cloud of dust. An old man was borne with the gale. Soon I heard a shuffling on the back porch, and there he stood, grey in the November noon.

"Is your Ma home?" he queried as he took the old felt hat from his thick white hair. "You tell her—it's the old man to see her."

Soon he had eaten bountifully of the "boiled dinner" and was drawn up to the kitchen range, talking to mother as if he were her oldest friend. Mother has lived in Page County fifty years, and knows most of the old timers. In fact, when we are in town for Saturday shopping some old fellow invariably delays our progress because he wishes to "reminisce" about the early days.

The old man looked hale enough, although he was nearly seventy. His hands were big and strong-looking and he had only a slight stoop. I believed him when he said to mother: "There's years of work in me yet, Mrs. Gray, and now just because my woman's down sick and I can't care for her and work too, the charities is going to send us off to the poor-farm." His face worked pitifully as he told it and his clumsy hand sought his print-handkerchief. "Now, I been wondering. I know you don't use that old house that your father built on this land when it was opened, and if you'd let me and Ma move in there and just live. . . I'd work for you till I drop."

My mother isn't a harsh woman but she's stern. She knew Mrs. Babcock's "clinical" record, too. She's what the charities call a "hopeless" case, spending every cent,

garrulous, soured — only I didn't know that the old man was Mr. Babcock till he told us.

"No, I can't have another woman on this farm. Don't you see how I can't? Besides, if she's sick you won't be able to do any work here either. You'll be better off at the County Farm this winter and so will she. I don't think any one could live all winter in the old house. They would freeze. In the spring if you want to work, you come back. I think you could 'batch' it all right in the spring."

So he went off, his big shoulders drooped a little more perceptibly. I saw him at Christmas when we went out to the County Farm carolling.

"And pray a gladsome Christmas
To all good Christian men,
Carol, brother, carol,
Christmas day again. . . ."

His strong old face stood out against a background of the vacuous and despairing. I did not see Mrs. Babcock. She kept to her room. She hadn't been about much all fall.

Just when spring was heaping us with extra work, he came back. We set him up as best we could in the old cabin, and whenever I went to town for provisions I always had to buy at least three plugs of "Beechnut" tobacco. It was embarrassing at first, but after a while it got to be a joke between the grocer and me when I'd say, "For the old man."

He couldn't do field-work, but he was invaluable for the odd jobs about the place, always mending something, always picking things up and trying to make the place look neat. He kept track of the truant hens, finding us eggs which were hidden in the barns and in fence corners. He brought us mushrooms which he found under old rotted stumps in the timber. He tapped all the sugar-maples down by the creek, and gave us the finished product in triumph.

"You didn't know I could manufacture Vermont sugar out here in Iowa, did you, girl?" he questioned.

Then we fixed up the orchard. My job was to scrape off the loose bark where insects could lodge, and then he put on a thick paste of lime and sulphur that turned the trunks a pale pink. Once I found in a knot-hole some brown eggs that I didn't want to disturb, but the old man laughed at me.

"Why, girl, them's only acorns — just last year's acorns! Some squirrel put 'em here." Then he showed me some real eggs in a high crotch, blue, pale, and lovely. He moved them carefully and plastered the lime in the crotch, and then put them back with infinite pains. And when the blossoms came and crowned the pink trunks that we had worked on, he said: "Girl, ain't that fairy-land itself!"

All summer long he worked with his scythe, keeping down the tall weeds near the fences and along the road. Some way it was borne in upon me when I watched him come up the lane after a day of this labor that he was like old Time, just slipping a little with every stroke of his scythe, and I remembered the little unidentified plot on the road back of the County Farm, the most forsaken spot in the world, the paupers' graveyard.

We had a wonderful garden that summer, the best in years. You know vegetable gardens sometimes go by default on a big farm, but the old man and I worked faithfully and for the most part in unison. One time, however, I was condemned because I didn't keep my hoe clean. "Girl, that ain't the way to do it. Look at your hoe all clouted with dirt. Why don't you keep it nice and clean like I do mine?" he demanded, as he took from his patched hip-pocket a whittled scraper and vigorously pushed the wet earth from my hoe.

Sometimes, while we worked, he would want to talk. "Girl," he said bitterly as he hoed deep into the black earth, "I owned a hundred-and-sixty of Iowa land once. Good Iowa land — better than this — up in Kossuth

county." He pushed the dirt from his hoe with his little scraper and rolled it absently in his fingers. I didn't say anything and he went on, "I lost it all in 1907. I'd put all my cash in hogs and a know-nothing boy I'd hired bedded them down in about six feet of straw on a cold night. Of course they sweated, and when he turned 'em out the next day they all caught cold. Damn him!" he vociferated. "They most all died. Well, things went from bad to worse. Instead of feeding my corn I had to sell it for nothing. A man can't make a go under all them odds. They foreclosed on me and I been a hired man ever since."

I wondered all summer why he worked so; just like he loved it and the old farm, too. It was natural that I should love it. I had been born on this farm. I knew the place in the woods where the fairies shod their horses. I had helped set out the little pines and walnuts along the fences. I had painted the fence-posts, a pretty gray tipped with white, and had stood on the top of the new silo to have my picture taken. But he, why he didn't own a single clod of the black earth. Only a clean, shiny hoe.

One long summer evening when the dusk lay level on the lawn, he came into the yard. "Girl," he said, "have you got any old magazines you can spare? I get hungry to read something."

I went into the house and found him some discarded farm journals. He seemed perfectly satisfied, but he lingered a little. I guess he was lonesome that night. I can hear his whimsical old voice yet, saying, "You like to sit here in the dusk, doin' nothin' but dreaming and building your little castles, but me — my dream's broken. I can't stand just to sit on the stoop and listen to them old crickets down in the hollow. I'd rather sit indoors, reading by my lamp; and listening to the crazy bugs bangin' and buzzin' 'round the chim'ny."

His conversational mood passed and he moved off, with the magazines I had given him tucked under his arm.

"Grass-hopper settin' on the sweet-pertater vine, sweet-pertater vine, sweet pertater vine,
Long come a turkey gobbler steppin' up behin',
Yanked him off the sweet-pertater vine,"
floated back to me through the dusk.

When fall came he was off through the timber, marking out wood that would do for fence-posts, and repairing the fences themselves. He cut out a lot of dead timber too. It was wonderful, the strength he could put behind an axe at his years. There were no more walnuts and hickories that year than others, but the old man knew just where to find them. After they were dried on the roof of the tool-shed and after the squirrels had had their share, we still had six bushels.

All this time he never mentioned his wife to us. He knew we didn't want him to. He seemed fairly content to "batch" it, but he used to walk out to the County Farm on Sundays with his pay. When he got back he was usually glum for a couple of days. But we didn't say anything.

Things drifted along further into the fall. He helped us barrel the apples. We had a good yield. I guess it was because we had "limed" the trees so well in the spring. We made cider from the windfalls. The old man found where some bees had hived in the barn, too, and we had real honey, strained and golden.

When a Sunday came he wanted to go over to the County Farm and take his wife some nuts and cider, and some sauerkraut that he had salted down before the frost got the late cabbages. It made quite a load, and I offered him my horse. I can see them yet, the old man, bowed and worn, in his rough jacket with his knap-sack slung over his shoulder, on the sleek black horse with the proud, high-arched neck.

He didn't come back until Monday morning when we had just got the washing out.

"I stayed to help 'em out a little. They're short a hand. You know, old Mr. Knowles has been failing and he

dropped dead in his tracks day before yesterday and they sent him to the medical college."

And then he went on, his eyes staring out beyond us and not talking to us at all, "Did they try to notify his relatives or give him Christian burial as a man ought to have? No, he was just a stiff — just public property, kept at the support of the county, and they can do anything they want to with his old hide down at the medical school," he sneered. "God! I've got to get my woman out of there. I can't go on just being happy myself here on your farm away from it all. I kind of forgot what it was like out there, I been so happy here. But I want her to be happy. When I got married," the old shoulders squared, "I took certain vows and I hold these sacred on my honor." His shoulders rounded again. "Please, Mrs. Gray?"

Mother knew it was the inevitable question about bringing Mrs. Babcock to the farm. "I can't," she said firmly.

The old man straightened at the finality of her tone. "Then pay me off. I guess I got enough together to move us onto a little farm I seen advertised in southern Missouri. I got three hundred dollars out at four per cent and my back pay'll take us there and get us started. We can live in a tent at first, I guess. I got to get her out of there."

Mother didn't have the ready cash right then, and besides she half thought the old man would forget this wild notion. But the next day he showed me the advertisement in one of the fateful farm journals I had given him months before, unwittingly.

"I've sent for the prospectus, girl," he said excitedly.

A few nights later I was at my old stand over the evening dishes when he came into the kitchen. "Girl, your ma's paid me off. I ain't blaming her. I guess she knows what she's doin'!" The old eyes, deeply embedded in the sagging face, were shining. "Here, I want to show you some pictures — some pictures of my new

home." He held out the gaudy circular with its many pictures, maps traced in red ink, and the luring caption, "Magnificent Opportunity In Southern Missouri Land. Easy Terms. Long-time Payments."

His work-worn forefinger traced out on the map, "Get off at Nassau, go three miles west to the section line, then south five miles. There," he pointed in triumph to a huge red X, "that's it. Ten acres. There's a cabin on it, too. See, girl, how near Beaver Creek it's marked. There oughta be good fishin' in that creek."

His hand, trembling with excitement, underscored the words: GAME AND FISH ABOUND. "There, see, it says so."

He held out the money that mother had given him, and I thought of the three hundred dollars safely out at four per cent.

"Now, girl," he said, "you write me a right smart business letter, enclosing this here money as first payment, and I'll be on my land by Thanksgiving!"

The tears were in my eyes, and I turned to hide them from him. He was drawing something out of his haversack. It smelled. He held it out to me. "It's a little mole-skin I was saving for your Christmas. I was curing it on this here board. I guess you can finish it yourself. Then you put a tassel on it and it'll make you a nice, neat little purse."

THREE POEMS

By FLORENCE PAGE JAQUES

WILD SWANS

Wild swans,
Fly once again across the clear green sky!
Over the orange marsh grass, in the wind,
Unknown great wings, frost-petalled, passing by.

Where is your way,
O dangerously fair?
What path does your uncaptured longing find?
Where is the cold delight you rush to share?

I was in the tangled field when you flew over.
High over willows, over the clover,
North you flew!
O beautiful, O rare, with snow-wrought wings that knew
The black and tattered shadows of a stranger air.

Now I cannot forget the great ice hills,
Barren and desolate, where the north wind chills
A blue-misted domain; where you still wing
Swift and untouched among gray clouds — and fling
Rapture across despair.

WHITE PEACOCK

White peacock, against gray green mist
And trailing willow bough,
Spread your great fan of every laced delight
And snowflake tracery. Not now,
Or ever, will a far, a passionate flight
Disturb that splendor. Step serenely by,
Pitiful glorious loveliness, nor know
That you have missed the sky!

AFTERGLOW

Against the clear green of the evening sky
The black boughs of the twisted cedar hold
Night in their fragrance, and the wild geese cry
Across the wind. So still I stand and cold.
Oh, do not let the day die in the grass!
As the green afterglow is dimly crossed
With silver, hunt the unsaid words, that pass
Your heart, like shy small night things which are lost!

ACCEPTANCE

By NORA B. CUNNINGHAM

Rebellion is a luxury
 For richer lives;
It is by acquiescence
 That mine survives.
I take Fate's meager portion
 With upward, grateful look;
One must have surplus on his plate
 To throw it at the cook.

CHILD WITH A CROCUS

By LEE ANDREW WEBER

the crocus comes up
like a child's curiosity.

it is as unquenchable,
and as unanswerable,
and as delightful,
and as perplexing.

the child dances about it,
touching its delicate fingers
with her own,
peering into its full blossom,

and then turns a young blossom face
up to me,
bewildering me with crocus questions.

I'VE BEEN READING —

BY FRANK LUTHER MOTT

VACHEL LINDSAY

Every Soul Is a Circus is the title of Vachel Lindsay's latest volume of poems (Macmillan, \$2.75). The generalization may be debatable, but there can be no doubt that Vachel Lindsay's soul is a circus — and a three-ring circus at that. He is a play-boy who disports himself with the solar system and this circling sphere and these United States and everything in them.

The title poem in this collection is one of the best Mr. Lindsay has done in a long time. It is a kind of fantastic parade-chant, to be danced and sung down Michigan Avenue at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. Barnum and Jenny Lind are the central figures, and the piece is very American and very Chicagoan.

For every soul is a circus,
And every mind is a tent,
And every heart is a sawdust ring
Where the circling race is spent.
And the lake-storms and the breezes
Are but nets to save the brave,
And the planets are trapezes,
High, high above the grave.
So come, let us be bold with our songs, brothers,
Come, let us be bold with our songs.

Perhaps I am too arbitrary in pronouncing this the best piece in the new book. Miss Harriet Monroe recently told me in phrase similarly oracular that "The Virginians Are Coming Again" is the best of them. It is a good one. In it Mr. Lindsay visualizes the Virginians as saviors of our modern civilization — saviors of us from babbity and rottenness and inconsequence:

Gentlemen, hard-riding, long-legged men,
With horsewhip, dogwhip, gauntlet and braid,
Mutineers, musketeers,
In command
Unafraid.

What makes me happy in reading this volume is the tendency it evidences to revert, in some degree at least, to those "higher vaudeville" things of Lindsay's earlier robustiousness. I should willingly give all American hieroglyphics for a few good full-lunged chants in the older manner.

Every Soul Is a Circus will not greatly increase Mr. Lindsay's reputation; but it is a pleasant addition to his work, and the best since the *Golden Whales*. Physically, the volume is very attractive.

"Mr. Lindsay ought to be endowed," said Miss Monroe in the conversation I have already quoted from (without permission). I agree. All poets should be endowed. I'm not at all sure that it would make for better poetry; but I am very sure that life is harder for poets than for other people; and if being endowed would make living easier for them, I love them all enough to cast my vote in favor of endowments.

Pending endowments, we must encourage them however and whenever we can. A little book which must be pleasing to Mr. Lindsay as an earned tribute is Albert Edmund Trombly's *Vachel Lindsay, Adventurer* (Lucas Brothers, Columbia, Mo.) Mr. Trombly, too, is a poet—and a poet, as MIDLAND readers will agree, of no mean achievement. This book of his contains a biographical chapter (concerned chiefly with Mr. Lindsay's youth) and detailed considerations of Lindsayan prose and poetry, with a brief bibliography. There is some new material in the biography, and the criticism seems to me prevailingly sound. Evidently Mr. Trombly has not heard Mr. Lindsay read "The Congo" recently, or he would not bewail the "overemphatic" presentation of it: the last time I heard the poet read it, he actually *whispered* it. If I have a crow to pick with Mr. Lindsay, it is for a truancy to the earlier crusade for the robust and noisy chant in poetry . . . And he shows signs of returning to that faith.

TWO CHRISTS

The Christ story is the theme of two of the most widely discussed poems of recent months.

Lola Ridge, in *Firehead* (Payson and Clarke, \$2.50), begins with a poem on the crucifixion, and proceeds with the effect of that cataclysm upon others—John, Peter, Judas, the Marys, the unborn Thaddeus, and even some who are not mentioned in the Bible story. The verse form is, for the most part, founded upon an unrhymed, cadenced line; and its essence is to be found in profusion of imagery which seems to spring from a certain tenseness of regard. Very many of the images center about the idea of light. Another element that binds the whole together in one effect is the Mary Magdalen motif which runs through all the poems and makes them one, though of course the crucifixion itself does that most effectively. Christ himself is never named except by the pronoun, and the narrative is always clouded or blazing or lurid or shrouded with the poet's play of imagery. The result is that, although the pages have a cumulative fascination for the reader—somewhat as though one were hypnotized by the incessant bright flashing of the poem's million facets—the grandeur of the high argument is forgotten, or felt but dimly. No reader can take this poem lightly; but I, for one, am forced to the conclusion that it is more interesting technically than it is moving and memorable emotionally. That is cer-

tainly the severest comment one could make upon it. Perhaps it is too severe: *Firehead* has very surely some elements of greatness.

I cannot say as much of Robinson Jeffers' *Dear Judas* (Horace Liveright, \$2.50). The author says the title poem is cast "in a somewhat new dramatic form." It is indeed new, in that the poet simply plays ducks and drakes with the time element. If one line is supposed to be spoken in the future, the next may be in the past and a third in the present. Indeed one is often uncertain just what the present of the poem is. The purpose is clearly to apply some new motives and psychology to Jesus, Judas, Mary, and other actors; but the philosophy of it all quickly becomes a hopeless morass.

The other long poem of the volume is much better. "The Loving Shepherdess" is a child of nature whose indiscriminate loving brings a very tragic denouement, thus making the poem (quite unintentionally, if I know the author) something of a tractate in favor of conventional morality. But the poem has a moving power; and if it had not been slighted in the latter part, it might have been almost a great poem. The author seems to have tired, at the last, of the poor girl's witless wanderings and unceasing misfortunes; nothing in it all is condensed until then; but at the end it is as though the poet said, "Well, this has been going on long enough; let's put the poor girl out of her misery and go and have supper."

HARVARD SQUARE

Thomas W. Duncan's *From a Harvard Notebook* (Maizeland Press, \$1.50) is a pleasant series of poems inspired by college experiences. It is blank verse which is chiefly employed, and the technique is competent and effortless. Most of the episodes have to do with the study of literature; they are imaginative pieces about Shakespeare, Swift, Sheridan. Perhaps the most impressive of them is the first, in which the poet discovers Harvard Yard. These agreeable verses are given a suitable format in one of the beautiful Maizeland volumes.

CONTRAPUNTAL EFFECTS

"What I had from the outset been somewhat doubtfully hankering for was some way of getting contrapuntal effects in poetry—the effects of contrasting and conflicting tones and themes, a kind of underlying simultaneity in dissimilarity." Thus wrote Conrad Aiken some years ago in *Poetry*.

Here in his *Collected Poems* (Scribner, \$3.50) we have much of what Mr. Aiken was then hankering for. We have it especially in "The Jig of Forslin," "The House of Dust," and "Senlin." We have also something else, not inharmonious with this technical ideal and—to my mind, at least—decidedly more

valid: we have a feeling for the fascinating variety of this web of life. In the beginning of "The House of Dust" there is "the eternal asker of answers":

Looking down from a window high in a wall
He sees us all;
Lifting our pallid faces toward the rain,
Searching the sky, and going our ways again,
Standing in doorways, waiting under the trees . . .
There, in the high bright window, he dreams, and sees
What we are blind to,— we who mass and crowd
From wall to wall in the darkening of a cloud.

The hankering after symphonic effects is, as Mr. Aiken fully understands, likely to defeat the more intellectual values of the poems. The material becomes subservient to the manner. One recalls Lanier's "Symphony," in which the music is so much more successful than the didactic economic theme, and the unintelligible *tours de force* of Mallarmé. Mr. Aiken does surprisingly well, however, when he marries his theme of the variety of life with his counterpoint.

But I cannot help believing that he does his best work in passages which I am willing to take quite out of his symphony and to regard as separate pieces. Senlin at evening is fine, and the riveter, and the girl who dies under ether, in "The House of Dust."

Mr. Aiken can tell a story with zest and gusto, as in "Punch: the Immortal Liar," and he can write, now and again, golden lines.

I quote three stanzas from one of the poems of "Priapus and the Pool" to show the sheer beauty of Mr. Aiken's music as he sometimes writes it. I have not space for the three remaining stanzas, though I should like to give them because they complete both melody and thought:

This is the shape of the leaf, and this of the flower,
And this the pale bole of the tree
Which watches its bough in a pool of unwavering water
In a land we never shall see.

The thrush on the bough is silent, the dew falls softly,
In the evening is hardly a sound.
And the three beautiful pilgrims who come here together
Touch lightly the dust of the ground,

Touch it with feet that trouble the dust but as wings do,
Come shyly together, are still,
Like dancers who wait, in a pause of the music, for music
The exquisite silence to fill.

BIOGRAPHICAL

EDYTHE SQUIER DRAPER has contributed stories to earlier issues of *THE MIDLAND* and to other magazines. She lives at Oswego Kansas.

Five Iowa poets are represented in this issue of *THE MIDLAND*. MILDRED FOWLER FIELD and JAY G. SIGMUND are both residents of Cedar Rapids, and both are well known to *MIDLAND* readers through their work previously published in the magazine. THOMAS W. DUNCAN has also contributed to an earlier issue of *THE MIDLAND*. He is doing newspaper work in Des Moines. Of the Iowa poets first presented in this issue, JEAN BEARDSLEE lives at Albia, and DOREN W. THARP is an instructor in the English department of Iowa State College at Ames.

PAUL F. COREY is a former Iowan now living on a farm near New York City.

LOREN S. EISELEY lives at Lincoln, Nebraska, and is one of the editors of *The Prairie Schooner*.

MARY KATHARINE REELY is the author of stories in some of the earlier volumes of *THE MIDLAND*. She is engaged in state library work at Madison, Wisconsin.

MOE BRAGIN is a young Brooklyn writer. This is his first appearance in *THE MIDLAND*.

EDITH ROLES JACOB, whose first work in *THE MIDLAND* appears in the Sketch Book of this issue, lives at Warrensburg, Missouri.

FRANCES PEARSONS DOLLIVER, the other Sketch Book contributor, is a graduate of the University of Iowa, now teaching at Fort Dodge.

FLORENCE PAGE JAKES has contributed to several volumes of *THE MIDLAND*. She is now living in New York City.

NORA B. CUNNINGHAM, also a contributor to earlier issues, lives at Chanute, Kansas.

LEE ANDREW WEBER is a native of Omaha and graduate of the University of Iowa, now working in New York.

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J. E. Gatens, Notary Public

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